

AMBS alumni news

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Encouragement appears often in this issue of *Alumni News*. Personal stories of graduates may remind us of our own being encouraged to consider ministry. Similarly, many of us may recall our astonishment or surprise when our encouragers named our gifts aloud to us. And that "Have you considered . . . ?" question led us eventually to a time of study and preparation at AMBS.

During Pastors Week in January almost 200 pastors, business people, professors, conference ministers and members of MEDA (Mennonite Economic Development Associates) gathered on campus. We worshiped together . . . laughed together . . . heard sermons full of audience responses and cultural perspectives different from our own. We considered ways to encourage the poor and to alleviate poverty in our world. We shared our stories and questions with friends. And we were "mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine." (*Romans 1:12*)

Are we noticing the sisters and brothers in our congregations who have gifts of ministry? Have we named those gifts for them? Have we spoken the words, "have you considered . . ." to them?

"Therefore encourage one another and build up each other." (*1 Thes. 5:11*)

—**Rhoda Schrag, Alumni Association president**

Encouraged toward ministry

Beth A. Miller, MDiv 2012

I was a new mom, struggling with health issues, when our congregation—Germantown Mennonite—had invited Rosie Epp (MDiv 1983) as an interim pastor. I ended up orienting Rosie to the congregation, explaining who was who, as well as some of the behind the scenes issues. One afternoon she looked at me and said, "Why in the world aren't you a pastor? You have gifts for the work."

I was totally shocked and blew off the comment. I came out of the "Old" Mennonite tradition, and becoming a pastor had never even crossed my mind. Being a minister's wife would be as close as I could get, (this was the early 1980s). But Rosie had planted a seed in my mind and heart that was persistent.

Later when we moved to Iowa, I cautiously told a chaplain that her

work sounded interesting, not knowing that she was ready to resign and finish her education. I was asked to serve as the chaplain of a nursing home, and found I loved the work.

It was in this setting another person, David Boshart, urged me to think of pastoring and seminary work. Again, I was surprised—but more at how the Lord was moving in my life, forging me into a minister.

I have "tapped" several people on the shoulder for ministry—but none has taken the plunge yet. God's timing is a
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Fall class snapshot



Gary Yamasaki (MDiv 1988) was guest lecturer in November in Old Testament Theology. He introduced Perspective Criticism, an interpretative methodology for analysis of biblical narratives focusing on the point-of-view of the narrative. Gary, who holds a Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary, is a member of the Bible and theological studies faculty at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, B.C.

Encouraged toward ministry

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mystery—I continue to pray for those individuals, that they may be open to God's leading in their lives.

Beth Miller lives in Wellman, Iowa, doing free-lance pastoral counseling and pulpit supply. She is active in Kalona Mennonite Church.

Joanne Gallardo, MDiv 2010

I joined the Mennonite church in my teens. Before then, participation in church wasn't something I had ever considered. I loved church, but had only thought that leadership in the church was for "certain people,"

certainly not women, and certainly not me.

It was my experience at Tedrow Mennonite Church in Ohio that changed my perspective of ministry. My congregation was excellent at shoulder-tapping. They'd shoulder-tap youth in particular to be a part of Sunday morning worship. It was then that I started to song lead, worship lead and even preach. I carried this interest in worship to Goshen College, where I participated in the Ministry Inquiry Program and started to think about seminary.



My major was Music Education, and while I appreciated and still love music, my call to the church felt stronger, and music was such a part of my church experience, I didn't feel like I was "leaving music behind" by considering ministry. The church had given me a sense of belonging, and it was a place where a lot of my beliefs felt "at home."

I started to feel called to dedicate my future work to the church. I loved my inquiry program experience, I loved what I was studying at Goshen and I wanted "more." Several people, pastors and professors included, encouraged me to attend AMBS. Most of the pastors I worked with or knew had graduated from AMBS with very positive things to say. I had attended AMBS banquets and visiting days and had a strong interest in what I saw and heard. I was able to talk to professors and read works that they had written. Everyone seemed approachable and dedicated to their discipline. I had appreciated my Anabaptist education, and I knew I wanted my seminary experience to be influenced by Anabaptism.

In my current work at Eastern Mennonite University, I am very appreciative of my AMBS experience. I have oftentimes shared my experience with students, and I consider it part of my job to encourage young people who feel called to ministry. I would certainly recommend AMBS as a place to discover one's calling.

Joanne Gallardo is associate campus pastor for Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

Ruben Chupp, MDiv student

I was working in a factory, making a lot of money, buying a lot of stuff—aiming for the American dream (which is a moving target). I should have been happy, but wasn't. Via a scenic, circuitous route, faith found me in February 1985. Not long after, I began asking God to: get me out of the factory, let me use my gifts (though I didn't know



what they were), let me make a difference in people's lives. Pastoral ministry was not part of that equation or personal thinking.

In 1987, four pastors in five weeks approached me with a singular question, in a variety of forms: Have you considered pastoral ministry? My answer: "Maybe later, when my children have graduated from high school, but not now."

Others joined the choir of asking. God's voice became more insistent. Locust Grove Mennonite (Michigan) elders and pastor, a small group I was leading: all urged consideration of ministry training. So did random friends. But how to move forward? Education was needed but I could not, at that stage of life, travel the traditional route: college, seminary, ministry.

Then a pastor suggested Hesston College's Pastoral Ministry Program. I enrolled there in 1988, graduating in 1990, assuming my first pastoral position that fall at Sugar Creek Mennonite in Wayland, Iowa. In 1995, I began intermittently taking classes at AMBS, eventually attaining a Certificate of Theological Studies. I continue to take classes at AMBS, with a goal of eventually receiving a Master of Divinity.

Those who urged me to consider ministry were people I trusted, followers of Christ who cared about my family, cared about me. Their encouragement to consider ministry included gracious words of faith and affirmation. More than pondering pastoral leadership with Idella and myself, they came alongside and were God's presence to us and our sons and daughter.

In similar ways, I have had the privilege of coming alongside six others who have tested God's call to ministry. (Currently, Paula Lemus, an AMBS student, is an intern at North Main, pondering pastoral gifts and call). The church names pastoral gifts in others and extends opportunities to exercise those abilities. Our institutions of learning—Hesston College, AMBS, etc.—then educate those gifts and abilities.

In hindsight, I cannot measure which was more important: those who confirmed the call or those who educated it. Both groups spoke for God, embodied Jesus. For those who walked with me I am deeply grateful. For those whom I have walked with I am deeply grateful. I have learned much from both experiences.

Ruben Chupp is pastor of North Main Street Mennonite Church in Nappanee, Ind. •

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ALUMNI NEWS NOTES

Martha Smith Good (MDiv 1977) recently self-published her memoirs, titled *Breaking Ground: One Woman's Journey into Pastoral Ministry*. Copies can be received by sending a request to mg.good@me.com. The price is \$15.00 plus postage.

Lauren Friesen (MDiv 1970) has been granted the Outstanding Alumni Award by Pacific School of Religion (where he earned an MA and PhD), conferred January 30. Lauren is the chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Michigan-Flint.

Weldon Martens (MDiv 1984) finished one year as interim vice president of student life at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. He has begun "Travel With Weldon Martens," hosting international tours including "Footsteps of Paul," May 20 to June 3, to Greece and Rome. See www.bethelks.edu/alumni; select *Events*, then

Travel for Alumni and Friends.

James E. Metzler (MAPS 1977) works two days a week as a hospice chaplain, primarily in nursing homes in the Birmingham, Ala., area.

J Robert Charles (MDiv 1979) teaches 20th-century world and U.S. history at St. Francis College, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Franklin Breckenridge (MDiv 1999) is pastor of Olivet African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Bend, Ind. In October Franklin and Cora, his wife, were recognized for their leadership and service to the Indiana NAACP organization.

June Alliman Yoder (MDiv 1988 and professor emerita) invites others to join her on a tour to San Francisco, June 24–27, to take in the world premier performance of "The Gospel of Mary Magdalene," by the San Francisco Opera Company. For information, visit www.

mennotrav.com/vacation/groups/marymagdalene/

Andy Alexis-Baker (MATS 2007) is co-editor of *A faith embracing all creatures: Addressing commonly asked questions about Christian care for animals*, published by Cascade Books. **Malinda Berry (MAPS 2000)** wrote the chapter, "What about animal sacrifice in the Hebrew Scriptures?"; **Nekeisha Alexis-Baker (MATS 2008)** wrote the chapter, "Doesn't the Bible say that humans are more important than animals?"; and Andy wrote the chapter, "Didn't Jesus eat fish?" The book is part of the Peaceable Kingdom Series: peaceablekingdomseries.com.

Ann K. Gingrich (MATS 1987) died January 18 in Goshen, Ind. She was AMBS pastoral counselor from 1983 to 1990, and in 2005 she was honored with the AMBS Alumni Ministry and Service Award. She

was a teacher; peace evangelist, mission worker and later overseer with her husband, Paul; retreat leader; worship leader and occasional preacher; and a resource to congregations and church groups. She had a special interest in supporting people who are victims of abuse. She served on the AMBS Alumni Association executive committee from 2010 to 2011.

Bethan Theunissen (MDiv 1994) is pastor at Trinity United Church, Vancouver, B.C. Read about her work at www.trinityunitedchurch.ca/aboutus/team.shtml

Rosanna McFadden (MDiv 2011) was ordained for ministry, December 23, at Creekside Church of the Brethren in Elkhart.



Dori Zerbe Cornelsen (MDiv 1993) led a Pastors Week workshop on revitalizing the experience of giving and collecting offerings in worship services. Dori is a stewardship consultant with Mennonite Foundation Canada.

Other alumni who led Pastors Week workshops included **Vyron Schmidt (MDiv 1980)** and **Terry Shue, Karen Martens Zimmerly (MATS 1986)** and **David Bergen, Allan Rudy-Froese (MDiv 1992)**, **Cyneatha Millsaps (MDiv 2008)** and **David B. Miller (MDiv 1993)**. These workshops explored the intersections of money, faith and church life at the January 28–31 event on the theme of Jubilee economics.

AMBS notes

Emma Richards (BTh 1950) was the first woman ordained for congregational ministry in the Mennonite Church. *According to the grace given to her: The ministry of Emma Sommers Rich* has just been released by the Institute of Mennonite Studies. It tells the story of her ordination and traces the roots of Emma's call and the encounters that shaped her legacy as model and mentor. See www.ambs.edu/publishing/New-publications.cfm.

Millard Lind (BD 1944, professor emeritus of Old Testament) has completed an English translation of a German commentary: *The Book of Isaiah: Its Composition and Final Form* (Sheffield Phoenix Press).

Two new books by **Willard Swartley (BD 1962, professor emeritus)** will be available soon:

- *John in the Believers Church Bible Commentary* series, published by Herald Press.
- *Living Gift: John's Jesus in meditation and poetry, art and song*, with materials and indices of resources for personal and corporate worship.

Practicing Reconciliation blog

Join Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS president, in asking questions and engaging issues in the church. Her blog, Practicing Reconciliation, will "pose questions, test assumptions, resist labels, play with possibilities, experiment with integration, practice wholeness": www.ambs.edu/practicingreconciliation/ •



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Spring 2013
Volume 18 Issue 3

AMBS Alumni News is published three times a year by Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Please send suggestions and news notes about alumni to editor Mary E. Klassen at mklassen@ambs.edu

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A seminary of
Mennonite Church USA and
Mennonite Church Canada

Sermon claims God's promises



Cyneatha Millsaps preached at one of the Pastors Week worship services. In addition, she participated in a session reflecting on the impact of the Fellowship of Hope congregation on members and the neighborhood, which is where she grew up.

In her sermon during Pastors Week, Cyneatha Millsaps, (MDiv 2008) pastor of Community Mennonite Church, Markham, Ill., challenged participants to leap into God's promises.

She gave testimony to the impact of Fellowship of Hope, an Elkhart congregation that began in the 1960s with several seminary families and that practiced communal sharing of income and possessions. Cyneatha, who grew up in the neighborhood, said, "We benefitted in our community because a few people dared to believe the Word of God; dared to believe it and jumped into that promise."

She also said, "Young people in my community got to know the love of God first hand. We lived it every day, and because of that we expected it every day."

Recordings of Cyneatha's sermon, the sermons of **David B. Miller, (MDiv 1993)** associate professor of missional leadership development, and Leonard Dow, senior pastor of Oxford Circle Mennonite Church, Philadelphia, and presentations by Pastors Week presenter Kim Tan are available on AMBS's iTunes U channel. Visit www.ambs.edu/news-events/iTunesU.cfm for a link to the site. ●